Achieving Irreversible Momentum

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Editorial Abstract: MAJ Dunbar provides a "boots-on-ground" perspective of operational level influence operations. As a companion piece to LTC Frank DeCarvalho's "Capacity Building Solidifies Gains in Security: Task Force Marne's Non-Lethal Targeting" [IO Sphere, Summer 2008], Dunbar examines recent successes in planning and executing non-lethal operations in Iraq. He emphasizes how proper synchronization of all information operations core and supporting capabilities can produce almost 'unstoppable' strong positive trends in achieving commanders' objectives.

Upon completion of my third tour of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), this author has come to the realization that the war in Iraq cannot be won without an effective Information Operations campaign. As part of the surge of forces, the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) deployed on 18 March 2007 from Ft. Stewart, GA to support OIF V. 3ID, also known as Task Force (TF) Marne, operated within the Multi-National Division-Center (MND-C) battlespace. TF Marne consisted of five standard Brigades including 2nd BDE, 3ID, 3rd BDE, 3ID, 4th BDE, 3ID, 3rd Combat Aviation BDE, and 3rd BDE, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). TF Marne also had two non-standard BDEs with the 214th Fires BDE from Ft. Sill, OK, and the 1st Georgian BDE from Gori, Republic of Georgia (Allied forces), and several additional supporting units.

This was my most mentally demanding deployment experience, by far. Yet the benefits included better defining IO, facilitating successful pre-deployment activities, and organizing IO or G7 sections. Host nation-related topics, to include ways to manage Sons of Iraq (SOI) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Counter Malign Foreign Influences, and prioritize Civil Military Operations (CMO) are the major focus. Additionally, this article offers some specific examples of the TF Marne Commander's 'starfish' model community program that helped influence Iraqi's perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Plus, included here are tactics, techniques, and procedures on establishing working relationships with various agencies to include Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Combat Camera (COMCAM). This article is intended to assist IO practitioners, staff members, and commanders at brigade and division in planning and executing non-lethal activities. My goal is to provide useful insight into what an IO planner and BDE IO officer can expect to encounter in a combat environment, and how to 'obtain an edge on the enemy' in the cognitive domain. In a complex environment, it's very difficult to gain irreversible momentum—but this should always be an IO goal.

There are no perfect systems in combat and every unit is unique. Often times, IO planners must make adjustments in order to operate more efficiently within the given environment. One key factor is developing an IO campaign plan prior to deployment. The commander must approve the plan to ensure adequate support from staff, subordinate units, higher headquarters, and attached units. Once in theater, the operational tempo is extremely fast-paced, full of unforeseen events, and thus often difficult to manage. Hence, during garrison operations, it's more advantageous to dedicate the necessary time to build a comprehensive IO strategy. As an example, critical personnel such as the G7, Deputy G7, IO planner, Public Affairs Officer (PAO), and Civil Affairs officer must be involved to achieve synchronization of efforts in influencing Local Nationals (LNs) to support specific objectives. This is also a prime opportunity to have personnel attend the Tactical Information Operations Course (TIOC). There are two ways to receive training: attend the resident course, or coordinate for mobile training team representatives to conduct the course at your home station; both last a period of three weeks. The TIOC is particularly useful for individuals at the battalion-level and below to recognize significant enemy IO activities, report information to higher headquarters, and prevent US soldiers from conducting themselves inappropriately.

The IO Staff Composition

The TF Marne IO section fell under the leadership of the division's Effects Coordinator (ECOORD). The ECOORD was responsible for all non-lethal operations, and held the rank of Colonel/O-6. The ECOORD was the first-line supervisor for the division chief of information operations or G7. The G7 (Lieutenant Colonel/O-5) provided guidance to the commanding general on

Figure 1. IO Task Organization Chart (Task Force Marne)
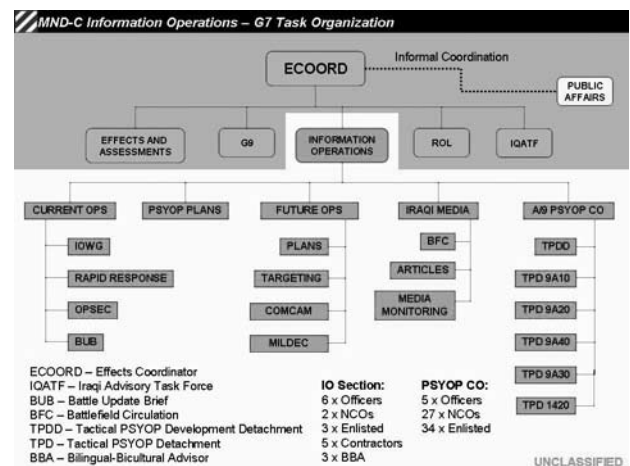
IO activities, PSYOP products, themes and messages, and talking points. He also provided guidance to the IO section, reviewed products, gave presentations, and provided oversight to all activity within the IO staff element (Figure 1). This consisted of five sections: current operations; plans; targeting; Iraqi media; and PSYOP, all of which was closely managed by the Deputy G7 (Major/O-4).

The Deputy G7 also facilitated the 3ID's IO Working Group, providing opportunities for IO officers and key staff members at BDE and division-level to provide updates, crosstalk, coordinate, and synchronize myriad non-lethal activities. Current operations focused on daily events in the division's Operational Environment (OE). Current operations officers (Captain/O-3 and civilian equivalent) tracked significant activities, conducted numerous IO battle drills, and disseminated information across the division staff. Current operations also required coordination with higher headquarters and subordinate units to synchronize efforts. The IO planner (Major) incorporated non-lethal planning efforts into each phase of current and future operations. Most importantly is linking into the division planners and producing a detailed IO annex for BDE IO officers to easily understand and accomplish the mission. The targeting officer provided input on ways to strategically target, engage, and kill or capture criminals or terrorists. This included face-to-face engagements, distributing wanted posters, and airing radio messages.

Two vital assets within the G7 staff were the Iraqi Media Section (IMS) and PSYOP. Although Iraqi media is a non-doctrinal responsibility for an IO section, TF Marne's Iraqi Media Officer established over 90 media contacts, conducted battlefield circulation missions, and monitored Iraqi news on a daily basis. The IMS also coordinated with Public Affairs to synchronize efforts. This proved invaluable because TF Marne disseminated immediate press releases, and assessed the effects by monitoring television broadcasts

and websites. Often times, traditional PA focus is on communicating with Western media. Although this role is important, information disseminated on satellite television is far more influential than one would imagine. Iraqi media interviews and news clips can reach large masses of people in a relatively short period of time.

The PSYOP officer assisted in the production of a large quantity of print products, television commercials, billboards, and radio messages. Most Iraqis rely on television as their main news source. The division PSYOP section (Major and Master Sergeant/E-8) made big dividends with rapid response radio messages, leaflet drops, and television commercials. In addition, the PSYOP planner staffed products at BDE and division level. Some PSYOP products required Multi-National Force-Iraq approval, which at times was quite time-consuming. TF Marne PSYOP representatives communicated with division legal advisors and higher headquarter on a regular basis, to facilitate the approval process as much as possible. The entire PSYOP approval process was a team effort.

Sons of Iraq

Implementation of the SOI program, formerly known as "Concerned Local Citizens," morphed from a modest startup into a huge success. SOIs are Iraqi citizens that have volunteered to defend their neighborhoods from terrorist activity. As a BDE IO officer, one of your main responsibilities is to build the commander's SOI program awareness, in his or her OE. In the past six months [as of mid-2008], military/civilian cooperation within local communities has drastically enhanced the landscape of TF Marne's battlespace. Statistically speaking, attacks dropped to their lowest levels since June 2005 throughout much of Iraq. Improvised Explosive Devices

Hajji Vinn Jahn, tribal sheik, being interviewed on improved security with SOI representatives in the background in Vinn Jann Village, Iraq. (TF Marne)

(IEDs), indirect fire attacks, and small arms fire attacks decreased by 60% in TF Marne's OE. Casualty rates (civilian/military) decreased by 63% within TF Marne's operational environment. The grass-roots SOI program, consisting of both Shia and Sunni groups, gets much of the credit for these improvements. TF Marne averaged 25 attacks per day in April 2007, and by January 2008 attacks decreased to an average of two per day.

SOIs range from 18-72 years of age. They are people who are tired of Al Qaeda terrorizing their communities and threatening the health and welfare of their children. Each certified SOI member can earn a paycheck through Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funding. Going forward with this program immediately assisted the local population, while achieving focused effects. Most Iraqi males take pride in providing for their families, and this program allows them to do so without reverting to the insurgency. This essentially is a win-win situation: it keeps citizens gainfully employed; reduces the chances of these same individuals conducting attacks against Iraqi or Coalition forces; and enables SOIs to defend their own neighborhoods where no Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are present. This program has proven to be an excellent enabler for influencing the Iraqi people. Notably, the pan-Arab media reported countless "good news" stories daily, illustrating the courage and commitment of the law-abiding populace.

Iraqi Security Forces on patrol.
(Defense Link)

Additional professional elements at battalion level include a uniform policy, to clearly identify SOIs as friendly, especially during night operations. They are armed; authorized to carry assault rifles, though crew-serve and anti-aircraft weapons are strictly prohibited. (In fact, the majority of weapons obtained by SOIs are via discoveries of enemy weapons caches.) Most importantly, SOIs are contractually obligated to defend their communities. This is a stepping stone to long-term employment into the ISF, which stimulates self-assurance in individuals, local sheiks, Iraqi military leadership, provincial leaders, and local government figures. Additionally, SOIs have opportunities to earn up to US $10,000 reward money for reporting tips on the location of IEDs, weapons and ammunition caches, and targeted High Value Individuals (HVIs).

The Multi-National Corps-Iraq has established a cap for TF Marne of 32,000 SOIs. This prevents accelerated growth in areas not regularly patrolled by US soldiers. A major Coalition concern over having so many SOI members in the MND-C OE is the possibility of "flipping," or turning against ISF/CF. Fratricide is also a risk; recognition of friendly versus enemy is important. Thus, supervision of SOI personnel is important. Each of the four maneuver BDEs averages 9,000 SOI members. CF routinely monitor and dialogue with SOIs to gather information, provide assistance, and ensure all security activities are synchronized.

Managing SOI activity assists CF in maintaining a good platform and perception within the communities. The perception of one local sheik or SOI group having more control or privileges than another could easily cause friction among the populace. SOI members have an obligation to perform their duties, obey their tribal leaders, and cooperate with CF. There are no guarantees that a SOI member will not turn against the CF and support terrorist activities. However, with a source of income, good working relationships, and multiple intelligence sources, SOIs have assisted the Coalition in successfully rooting out the enemy.

Securing their communities is an SOI mechanism in the security evolution—it demonstrates initiative, progress, and Iraqis taking charge. The most important aspect is, the more they do, the less we do in terms of manning checkpoints, patrolling, and conducting operations in order to create stability and security for Iraq. In some cases these citizens are capable of supporting key operations as well as gathering and reporting information on local extremist networks. The SOI members often function as guides or scouts during ISF/CF mounted and dismounted patrols. They provide information, but do not engage as combatants unless attacked—and are not utilized by CF as a maneuver force. Some other responsibilities include manning checkpoints, securing infrastructure, and conducting random stop-and-search procedures on suspicious individuals and vehicles. To date [mid 2008], SOI members assisted TF Marne in acquiring actionable information, which yielded 7 HVIs, the detention of 521 individuals, and finding of 728 weapons and

ammunition caches. Not only do SOIs contribute to prosecuting the campaign, they are also increasing ISF manpower. Some SOIs transition into ISF based on their training, skill set, and aptitude. Regardless of how well individuals perform as SOIs, the TF Marne goal is for SOIs to join the ISF.

Iraqi Security Forces

The ISF have embedded Military Transition Teams, Special Police Transition Teams, and Police Transition Teams that effectively disseminate PSYOP products, themes and messages, and conduct routine face-to-face engagements. Teams of US soldiers (7-9 men) assist in training, offensive operations, and logistical matters to expound the capability of each particular ISF element. Recruiting drives are ongoing to increase the numbers of security work-force qualified individuals. TF Marne has over 60,000 ISF including Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, Border Transition Teams (BTTs), and National Police operating within its OE. Although this may appear to be a large number, based on the large scale of terrain, the command needs more ISF to broaden the spectrum of combat multipliers on the battlefield, and effectively contribute to fighting terrorists.

Countering Malign Foreign Influences

Foreign influence was one of TF Marne's toughest IO challenges. We

Iranian citizens transporting imported goods at
Zurbatiya Point of Entry. (TF Marne)

countered malign foreign influences by disseminating PSYOP products, strategically placing billboards, broadcasting well-articulated radio messages, and publishing detailed news articles in multiple Iraqi newspapers. As a proactive IO officer, you want to make sure you send the right message and through various mediums of radio, satellite television, and print products. Messages nested with higher headquarters provide reinforcement of themes and messages. These efforts will help persuade the target audience to comply with any instructions, or influence them to support your objectives. When developing a plan, always consider the average Iraqi citizen's point of view: you have to ask "what's in it for me." This facilitates both parties becoming winners. One area of foreign influence showed how the TF used both informational and traditional resources to help stem foreign influences.

There were plenty of reports involving the smuggling of weapons from foreign countries. For this reason it's called the "smuggling paradox." The Wasit Province bordering Iran is very dynamic, particularly because in the cities, politicians have the influence; and in the desert areas, tribes have the influence. Security checkpoints along high-traffic areas throughout Wasit intend to prevent smuggling of weapons, IED materials, and other accelerants heading into Baghdad. The 1st Georgian Brigade, with assistance from the US Army 214th Fires Brigade, led the effort. Another variable in this operation is having Russian-Arabic linguists working on the checkpoints. Additionally, BTTs are on station at the Point of Entry monitoring for suspicious activity at the border. While they work hard to prevent smuggling of accelerants into Iraq, unfortunately, BTTs are not on station 24/7. Traffic from Iran into Iraq is immense; Iran provides Iraq a large amount of produce, furniture, office supplies and other expendables on a daily basis. The Georgian BDE searched over 700 vehicles and over 2,200 personnel at the checkpoints daily—no small task even for this well-equipped force. TF Marne aggressively worked to combat bypassing of checkpoints through recently implemented and temporary "snap" TCPs. Conducted randomly, these checkpoints prevented additional smuggling via other routes. Combined with effective compliance messages, Coalition Forces achieved desired influence effects.

Civil Military Operations

Civil Military Operations establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental

Mudhehr Fayadh Baresh, a 72 year-old tribal commissioner and SOI leader, explains how he successfully foiled the plans of a would-be suicide vest bomber during checkpoint operations.
(US Army)

and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational United States objectives. (Field Manual 3-13 *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, Nov 2003)

While engaged in information warfare, IO planners can leverage numerous assets to help the Task Force gain irreversible momentum. CMO projects provide alternate ways for IO officers to better influence LNs to support CF objectives. Persuading people is all about meeting basic needs—if we want them to support US and host-nation strategic objectives. It's not what the US military wants to provide, it's the tangible items people desire that make the difference. Iraqis want fresh water to drink, electricity at their residence, and functional sewage systems. It is difficult to address complex projects if deficiencies exist in basic services. CMO is paramount to community improvement in Iraq. Your Civil Affairs Officer must be "go getter," but you can also help energize the CA folks, and assist them in developing creative ways to make significant impacts in the lives of Iraqi citizens. The Government of Iraq plays a major role in these projects, thus repairing water pumps, electrical grids, and providing humanitarian assistance (HA) must be a joint effort. Coordinating IO efforts with continuous HA helps maintain positive perceptions, especially during times of distress or emergency, setting up a framework for strong community relations. Again, the local forces play a significant role in providing security and interacting with the communities.

Medical services are always a major contribution. TF Marne senior leaders established several priority CMO projects, to include refurbishment of ten clinics. Iraqi doctors and staff are funded by the Iraqi Minister of Interior. Establishing operational health clinics with the assistance of qualified Iraqi doctors and medical staff and providing proper medical care for all citizens affects immediate results in the communities.

Lastly, always remember to address an education and work training program. This not only provides basic skills and employment, but provides opportunities for small business owners and market suppliers while "jump starting" local economies. Such actions can form a solid basis for long-standing relationships.

Commanding General Prioritization "Starfish"

The Commanding General used a fable to describe his priority programs: A woman found a boy on the beach tossing starfish back into the sea. When told he could not save them all, the boy replied "I can save this one." Identifying "starfish" programs made a difference in many communities among the local populace, as TF Marne IO officers in all sections capitalized on these projects in a variety of ways. Combined with other non-lethal assets, including the Governance and Economics Cell, the TF's positive influences contributed to strengthening stability throughout the region. The Iraqi Media Section coordinated local television coverage of community events, publicizing the success of CF, ISF, SOI, and local provincial officials all working together. The PSYOP section developed flyers and handbills to disseminate illustrations of progress made all over Iraq. BDE IO representatives employed COMCAM to capture still images for historical documentation, photo books, and posters. Two TF Marne starfish examples especially highlight our successes: Hawr Rajab, and the Iskandariyah Industrial Complex (IIC). CF transformed Hawr Rajab into a safe, thriving and secure community. TF Marne worked to provide LNs with "micro-grants," to develop businesses such as veterinary clinics, food markets, and shops. The Hawr Rajab starfish program also included school renovation: supplying computers with Internet access, science laboratories, office furnishings, and a library. Further, CF initiated a women's movement to raise health awareness. The citizens of Hawr Rajab actively embraced their community, and now openly support CF objectives.

Similarly, the Iskandariyah Industrial Complex project produced magnificent results. The citizens have sufficient electricity, renovated schools, paved roads, and improved sewage systems in this community. The IIC starfish program also established a 1,000 student vocational-technological center. As an economic engine, the IIC produces buses and caravans as well as providing an Army vehicle repair facility. The IIC became a key focus area for job opportunities, education, and revenue. The improved security situation in MND-C undoubtedly played a role in stability, as well as creating employment opportunities in Iskandariyah. All this is a result of coordinated efforts among all non-lethal TF capabilities—ensuring we had the right people at the right place and at the right time.

Psychological Operations

PSYOP is defined as "*operations planned to convey selected information*

Iraqi worker repairs a school in Iskandariyah. (US Army)

and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals." (Field Manual 3-13)

When properly employed, it can lower the morale and reduce the efficiency of enemy forces and create dissension within their ranks. It can also help separate local national support from insurgent activities. Sphere of influence engagements are pivotal in steering mayors, city councilmen, and governors in the right direction toward political success and harmony in Iraq. As the greatest "influencing" capability within the CENTCOM theater,

PSYOP assets served to highlight many political successes. PSYOP units aired various television commercials, placed billboards, and broadcast radio messages to spread news of progress. Along with traditional methods like disseminating flyers, these actions provide LNs with accurate and timely local community information.

Throughout the entire deployment, TF Marne leveraged PSYOP extensively to meet the commander's goals and objectives. By doctrine, the division staff has one PSYOP officer, and one PSYOP Noncommissioned Officer in the rank of Master Sergeant. Their main responsibility is to advise the Commanding General on how best to influence a foreign audience to achieve a desired endstate. Within TF Marne, each BDE has an attached Tactical PSYOP Detachment (TPD), to create themes and messages, talking points, print products, loud-speaker broadcasts, and conducts face-to-face engagements—as well as gathering "atmospherics." During this specific deployment, brigade level print capability dramatically improved with the arrival of risograph printers and cutters, which provide quicker production in response to crisis situations.

Ideally, to depict progress made in the fight against terrorism, BDE IO officers utilize PSYOP for the exploitation of killed or captured HVIs. It is important to recognize that BDEs are capable of conducting limited PSYOP, and these products at this level must be approved by the BDE commander. The division PSYOP representatives maintain visibility of all these actions, to ensure proper synchronization and approval at all higher echelons (division and corps levels).

BDE leadership must develop and understand the working relationships between BDE IO officers and TPD commanders. The TPD commander is the PSYOP subject matter expert and brings a wealth of knowledge to assist

the BDE IO officer in coordinating all IO/PSYOP activity. Getting these two are on the same sheet of music greatly increase communications across the BDE staff. Thus, there are plenty of good reasons to understand and utilize the PSYOP chain of command, and make proper usage of resources at the BDE level.

Combat Camera

COMCAM is the acquisition and utilization of still and motion imagery in support of military operations. The COMCAM mission is to provide the President of the United States, Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and unified Combatant Commands with a directed imagery capability to support operational and planning requirements during worldwide crises, contingencies, exercises, and wartime operations. COMCAM is another combat multiplier, and when properly used, it can be very effective. It is ideal for capturing still and video imagery on 'high payoff' events. Each BDE IO officer managed one COMCAM team consisting of two individuals. TF Marne COMCAM teams were heavily involved in all types of operations, capturing significant amounts of usable, footage beneficial for numerous TF products and for media use. *FOX News* aired COMCAM-derived video on Iranian-made rockets within hours of a large cache discovery. Combat Camera teams also facilitated the documentation of CMO projects such as humanitarian aide, medical operations, and school openings among others. TF Marne even used COMCAM photos to create a "coffee table book" containing photos of Iraqi citizens, ISF, and US Forces working together to make a difference in improving living conditions—and making progress in Iraq. As LNs view this book and see images of sincerity, hard work, and dedication of all involved, it's easy to see its powerful "influencing" effect. This product was also designed to help reduce IEDs on the battlefield and potentially save lives. As part of a greater influence campaign, such products can deter a would-be suicide bomber, and help turn him back into a law-abiding citizen. COMCAM teams also capture still imagery on significant events such as detainee releases, ISF graduations, and joint operations. Capturing these events also illustrates ISF in the lead. This brings up another truism of the IO mission: in most cases, in the eyes of the public, an event never happened unless there is a photo or video.

Conclusion

IO supports all Lines of Operations including Governance, Economics, Security, Transition, and Rule of Law. IO officers at all levels must educate the key leaders within their organization: the commander, deputy commander, executive officer, and operations officer. Such a knowledge base provides the means to incorporate IO as a combat multiplier. Despite numerous operational challenges, IO can achieve desired effects in transforming insurgent safe havens into efficient, secure, and productive communities. Successful security gains in Iraq during 2007-2008 opened a large window of opportunity, and IO was a major component in achieving irreversible momentum. Capacity building is the way ahead, with IO assisting in all aspects of informing the local populace via radio, newspapers, satellite television, and word-of-mouth. The Coalition must methodically and continually formulate those critical mission objectives, as well as matching assets—lethal and non-lethal—against those objectives. As a BDE IO officer, you can easily find yourself in charge of a significant effort, such as the Sons of Iraq program. Always be consistent and follow through with agreements either verbal or contractional to maintain good standings with tribal or government leaders. Manage the expectations of your host nation audience, and don't make promises your commander can't keep. Last, but certainly not least, is continuously informing the populous. Based on information collected over the past 15 months, IO planners are better prepared to face the challenges in Iraq. Irreversible momentum is a direct result of all non-lethal activities. Undoubtedly, increased non-lethal planning and execution efforts will reap larger rewards, helping stabilize Iraq for many years to come. ✑